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35th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda items 43 and 42

Culture of Peace: one day of plenary meetings to review progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action and the observance of the Decade at its midpoint

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/201)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/60/279)

Draft resolutions (A/60/L.4 and A/60/L.5)

Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/259)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.6)

The President: At the world summit in mid-September, our leaders reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, adopted by the General Assembly. They also committed themselves to taking action to promote a culture of peace and a dialogue at the local, national, regional and international levels.

This is the background for today's debate. It is thus not only topical, but of political relevance as well, that you, the Member States, will be called upon to provide guidance on the follow-up to the outcome document in this regard. Our deliberations are based on three reports, including one prepared by UNESCO on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*see A/60/279*).

According to the Declaration on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in 1999, the culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict by attacking their root causes, solving problems through dialogue and negotiation. A culture of peace is based on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral element preventing violence and conflict. In fact, many of the day-to-day activities of the United Nations aim to contribute to a culture of peace.

The observance of the Decade has now reached its midpoint. This is an opportunity to take stock of progress and to provide new impetus, focus and energy for the second half of the Decade. We need to ask ourselves, what have been promising and effective practices and approaches? Have we succeeded in bringing all stakeholders on board, including all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes? Have Governments done enough over the past five years to foster peace and non-violence at all levels? What more can be done to encourage civil society and the private

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sector to increase their role in support of a culture of peace that must be rooted in the minds and hearts of people, and especially those of young people?

Our concrete task ahead is to ensure that we continue to find the most effective ways to operationalize efforts to strengthen a culture of peace. Particular emphasis should not only be placed on the mechanism of collaboration, but also on the substantive areas of engagements, not least education; I emphasize, not least education.

In addition, we must define more effective ways to work with civil society and non-governmental organizations, the media and the private sector, in order to ensure strong and coherent action throughout the Decade. There are also new aspects that had not entered the international debate at the time the General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action. One of those aspects pertains to cultural diversity. In the summit outcome document, our leaders acknowledged the diversity of the world and recognized that all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. They also acknowledged the importance of respect for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world. Religious dialogue is being increasingly recognized for its contribution, not only to the objectives of the culture of peace, but also to the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples.

This leads me to the other matter on the agenda for today's plenary meeting, the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. The report of the Secretary-General reveals an emerging consensus on an overarching framework for effective dialogue-related activities. The framework consists of universally shared values, cutting across all cultures and civilizations, especially tolerance, mutual understanding and observance of human rights and democratic governance.

The major challenge for us all is to translate pledges to adhere to these values into concrete action through a variety of practical initiatives, as called for in the Programme of Action for the Dialogue among Civilizations. Here I would like to welcome the initiative by the Secretary-General to launch the Alliance of Civilizations on 14 July 2005, as proposed by the prime ministers of Spain and Turkey. This action aims to address the need for a concerted effort by the international community at both the institutional and civil society levels to bridge divides and overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that undermine trust and potentially threaten international security. We live in a world of much distrust and suspicion. We must mobilize the political will to change negative trends, in order to prevent polarization and pessimism. Strengthening a culture of peace, fostering interreligious dialogue and continuing the Dialogue among Civilizations will contribute to enhancing hope and belief in the future.

I should like to add that there is also a clear relationship between this work and our continuing United Nations reform process. The fact that we are discussing these three concepts together today in a plenary meeting of the General Assembly is an approach to nurture in the years to come. I hope that our discussions today will lead towards concrete and sustained action and strengthen our efforts to reach a truly global culture of peace and a meaningful Dialogue among Civilizations, cultures and peoples of our world.

I start by giving the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.5.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I wish to begin, Mr. President, by expressing our deep appreciation to you for organizing this day-long celebration of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. The timing is important, because it coincides with the midpoint of the Decade, as you have yourself just observed in your opening statement.

I am sure the deliberations today, under your able stewardship, Sir, will further strengthen our resolve to promote a culture of peace, one that brings peoples closer across cultures, civilizations and faiths and that, we hope, will create a world order where amity supplants atrocity, harmony overcomes hatred and understanding replaces intolerance.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/60/201). Appreciation is also owed to the Director-General of UNESCO for his continued and relentless efforts in this regard.

Recent history has witnessed a series of triumphs that humanity can justly take pride in. These have involved the ending of colonialism, the limiting of autocracy, the strengthening of democratic values and

institutions, the rise of liberalism and enhanced partnership between Governments and civil society in development.

Sadly, however, the period has not been without its share of tragedies. We have experienced unspeakable violence wreaked by war, terror and conflict, bringing death, destruction and suffering to millions.

The adoption of the Millennium Declaration provided us a unique opportunity to reinvigorate our endeavours. It constituted, among other things, a bill of human rights shaped by certain universal beliefs that would promote peace, development, dialogue, inclusion, equity, justice and tolerance. Our leaders endorsed those at the 2005 world summit. They mandated us to advance all initiatives in that respect. Our present effort is in consonance with their desires — indeed, with their decisions.

We believe that humanity, irrespective of an individual's culture, civilization or faith, shares many common values. We should focus on those to build the connecting bridges, to close the gaps and to fasten the links. It would be in our collective interest to devote our resources and capacities, intellectual and material, in favour of that campaign.

Bangladesh has been at the forefront of initiatives that promote greater understanding and tolerance among peoples. In our belief, that is achievable through dialogue and cooperation. My country was born of a bloody conflict. We therefore see great value in principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. Those ideals were endorsed by the membership in 1999 in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*). Bangladesh was privileged to steer that process.

The Programme of Action identifies major areas of focus: education; sustainable economic and social development; human rights; equality between men and women; democratic participation; advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity; participatory communication and free flow of information and knowledge; and international peace and security. Specific actions are set out in each area that would help bring our goals to fruition.

In a spirit of inclusiveness, Bangladesh has always welcomed all initiatives that seek to promote such dialogue and understanding. We believe that all of these initiatives are mutually reinforcing. We also believe that the participation of all actors — Governments, international organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations, young people, the private sector, community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, artists, journalists and humanitarian workers — is essential to realize our universal goal of a peaceful world, a world where we will be able to solve our problems through convergence of ideas rather than through confrontation.

While we promote a culture of peace and all such initiatives, we do not pretend that those objectives can be achieved in a vacuum. To make peace sustainable, it is imperative to create the right conditions for our peoples to live in dignity and in freedom from want and fear. All prevailing political, economic and socio-cultural injustices must also be addressed.

Bangladesh has always sought to play an important role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remains unflinching. Bangladesh has contributed some 39,000 peacekeepers so far, to 24 United Nations peacekeeping operations. More than 70 soldiers have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, to uphold United Nations values.

At home, on the domestic matrix, Bangladesh has been undergoing a quiet revolution. This is in the field of socio-economic development, maintaining growth in gross domestic product of over 5 per cent over two decades, raising per capita income, maintaining food security, increasing resilience to meet natural disasters, improving the human development index, enhancing gender parity and improving social and health indicators. We have pressed our indigenous intellectual resources to the service of development. Ideas such as microcredit and non-formal education — whose time has surely come — have been replicated widely. We believe that a world order that is informed by a culture of peace is conducive to the attainment of our development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A strengthened global partnership is, therefore, the call of the hour.

At this midpoint of the Decade, we wish to express our gratitude to all actors that have contributed to the promotion of such a culture. We applaud in this connection the role of UNESCO. Appreciation is also

due to other involved organizations which lie within and outside the United Nations system.

We are particularly thankful to civil society, including non-governmental organizations and young people. Their enthusiastic support to this cause has made a huge difference. Our special thanks go to the Fundación Cultura de Paz for its commendable work in compiling a report on the progress achieved by over 700 organizations from more than 100 countries, including my own. We urge all of them to continue their good work.

We believe that the promotion of a culture of peace is of paramount importance. This is more so today, when conflicts bred of misunderstanding and intolerance dot our globe. It is in this perspective that I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of a large number of delegations — actually 105 sponsors — the draft resolution entitled "International decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010", contained in document A/60/L.5. Additional sponsors continue to come forward. For instance, Brunei Darussalam and Marshall Islands have now joined us.

The draft resolution contains some technical updates vis-à-vis the resolution of the previous year (resolution 59/143). It contains the following additional elements: First, it takes note of the 2005 world summit outcome document adopted at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly (resolution 60/1). Secondly, it commends civil society, including non-governmental organizations and young people, for their activities in further promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, including through their campaign to raise awareness on a culture of peace. Here it takes note of the progress achieved by more than 700 organizations in more than 100 countries. And thirdly, it requests the Secretary-General, as agreed in the 2005 world summit outcome document, to explore enhancing mechanisms for the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

This draft resolution bears the enthusiastic seal of over 106 nations. They constitute an overwhelming majority in this House. They represent not just the voice — that too — but the aspirations of teeming billions. Some day — and this is more than a fond wish and is indeed a strong belief — a draft resolution on this item will carry the sponsorship of each and every delegation.

That is also our hope, for hope is what sustains us in adversity, stimulates our belief in life and encourages us to forge ahead. Also, this is not too tall an order. For has it not been aptly said that man's reach should exceed his grasp, for what else are the heavens for?

I hope that the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.6.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to commence by expressing our satisfaction that the General Assembly is addressing, in a joint debate, two very important items concerning the culture of peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (*A/60/201*, *A/60/259*) and for his unwavering commitment to the advancement of those lofty initiatives.

The international community has never been in more dire and urgent need of a concerted effort to promote a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations than it is today. Their significance was rightly recognized in the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) of the recently concluded summit, which reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, as well as other initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

The challenges that we all face are indeed multifaceted, and the old approaches based on power and exclusion have proved to be insufficient and, in most cases, inappropriate. Such approaches have even led to the exacerbation of tension by widening the divide, marginalizing and alienating significant portions of the global population, and providing fertile grounds for the spread of hatred, bigotry and violence. The perceived need for real — or even manufactured — enemies as a managerial tool has, in fact, transformed the nightmare of a clash of civilizations from a theoretical construct into a real possibility.

The desire of the international community to break away from the paradigm of exclusion was demonstrated by the unanimous designation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. A new paradigm should replace the outdated mode of analysis and behaviour, because today there is greater appreciation of our common vulnerability to threats ranging from terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to poverty and environmental degradation. Indeed, in the era of globalization, those menaces recognize no boundaries of geography, power or affluence. And it is thus hoped that the collective management of our common vulnerabilities is emerging as a better tool for global governance than perceived or imaginary enemies.

A new paradigm rests on the proposition that the sources of knowledge and wisdom are inherently diversified, that each civilization has much to offer and that inclusion will bring with it mutual enrichment and benefit. Resolution 56/6, on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted four years ago by the General Assembly, aptly defines the foundations of that emerging paradigm as "inclusion, and a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meaning and core values and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue" (part A, article 1). That is further elaborated by the Secretary-General's Group of Eminent Persons on Dialogue among Civilizations, which noted in its publication, *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*,

> "Dialogue brings with it equal footing ... as it is a process by which we accept, as much as we want to be accepted. We include, as much as we want to be included. We listen, as much as we want to be listened to.
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> "In these terms, dialogue can perhaps eventually usher in a new paradigm of global relations because it challenges the old paradigm. ... dialogue can be a framework where the weakest is accorded the privilege to be listened to, and where the strongest finds it necessary to explain its case to others."

Such a paradigm shift would, in fact, be a requirement for attaining the lofty objectives of larger freedom, development, security and human rights for all, and it needs to become the prevailing discourse of the new century if we want to leave our future generations with a more secure and prosperous world than the one we inherited. Strengthening the culture of dialogue among civilizations will prove to be a most important element in combating the calamities of the day, in particular terrorism. For terrorism seeks to make the diversity among nations the source of conflict, while dialogue among civilizations can help to make that very diversity the foundation for cooperation and collective betterment.

The Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action marked a milestone in our collective effort to embark on this self-evident yet innovative approach. Since its adoption, it has progressively mobilized greater interest by Member States, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and international and regional institutions.

Many countries, international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system, in particular UNESCO, have already submitted reports of their impressive activities in that regard to the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General indicated in his report in document A/60/259, those submissions suggest that the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations has provided the framework for various innovative approaches to promoting greater understanding and constructive interaction among peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds.

In that context, UNESCO has substantially contributed to the implementation of the Global Agenda by including it in its Medium-term Strategy for 2002-2007 with a view to achieving its strategic objective of safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

The General Assembly laid a solid foundation for institutionalizing, promoting and facilitating dialogue among civilizations through its resolution 53/22. Since the fifty-third session, the idea has been increasingly embraced by many around the globe. The designation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the adoption of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action were indeed major initiatives to enhance dialogue and understanding at the beginning of the new millennium. Those endeavours demonstrated the collective resolve of the international community to begin the millennium with a fresh approach to global

interactions and the determination to build a better tomorrow for future generations.

The time has come once again for the Assembly, as the sole universal body encompassing the representatives of nearly every nation on Earth, to further strengthen this emerging and promising paradigm by taking another step through the adoption of the draft resolution before us. It is therefore a great honour and privilege for me to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations". I do so on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, which, in addition to the 67 delegations mentioned in the draft, now include Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Panama, Poland, Peru, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Tunisia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The draft resolution takes stock of the achievements already accomplished and seeks to further advance the concept and its global implementation. It reiterates that dialogue among civilizations is a process between and within civilizations, founded on inclusion and a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meanings and core values and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue. It also emphasizes that the hearts and minds of the next generation are the real object of dialogue among civilizations.

The draft resolution welcomes the numerous initiatives and efforts to further promote dialogue among civilizations adopted by States, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations. It also recognizes the contribution of different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the dialogue on interfaith cooperation and the initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations.

The draft resolution invites States, international and regional organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to develop appropriate ways and means at the local, national, regional and international levels to further promote dialogue and mutual understanding among civilizations, and to report on their activities to the Secretary-General. Finally, by this draft resolution the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to explore enhancing implementation mechanisms of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform members that following consultations, the text of the eleventh preambular paragraph of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilization (resolution 56/6) has now been added to the draft resolution following the fifth preambular paragraph, and the text of the thirteenth preambular paragraph of the Global Agenda has been added following operative paragraph 4, with the words "Underlining the fact" replaced by the words "Reaffirms further" and the word "recognizing" replaced by the word "recognizes". Those paragraphs are being distributed to all delegations for ease of reference.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and other sponsors are confident that the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.6, as orally revised, will be endorsed unanimously by the General Assembly. That will be a clear affirmation by the international community of the shared commitment to advance the principles and objectives of dialogue, as well as our resolve to ensure that the world we will pass on to our children will be one of dialogue and not of clashes, one of communication and not of violence.

Before concluding, I would like to thank all those who sponsored the draft resolution and who, by providing us with their valuable comments and viewpoints, contributed to the strength of its message.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.4.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): On behalf of my delegation, allow me once again to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at this historic session. My delegation

pledges its full cooperation to you and the other members of the General Committee.

The Philippines is gratified to note that, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (*resolution 60/1*), world leaders reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*) as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*resolution 56/6*) and its Programme of Action, adopted by the General Assembly, and the value of different initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations, including the dialogue on interfaith cooperation. They also requested the Secretary-General to explore enhancing implementation mechanisms and to follow up on those initiatives.

In order to assist efforts to explore implementation mechanisms and to follow up on those initiatives, the Philippines is pleased to introduce, on behalf of the other sponsors, draft resolution A/60/L.4, entitled "Promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace". The draft resolution updates last year's resolution (59/23), incorporating new elements to reflect developments in the field since the General Assembly's adoption by consensus last year of that Philippines-initiated resolution, entitled "Promotion of interreligious dialogue". In particular, several significant events since then have endorsed the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of peace. My delegation would like to mention some of them.

In December, Albania hosted the Tirana Regional Summit on Interreligious and Interethnic Dialogue in South-East Europe, in which 13 leaders from the region participated and which culminated in the adoption of the Tirana Summit Declaration.

In April, a conference was held in Melbourne Australia, on the theme "Religion in peace and conflict: responding to militancy and fundamentalism". At that conference representatives from 15 countries of South-East Asia and the Pacific region adopted the Melbourne Declaration.

In June, at the second South Summit of the 132 member countries of the Group of 77, held in Qatar, participating leaders adopted the Doha Declaration in which they recognized

> "that the respect for religious and cultural diversity in an increasingly globalizing world contributes to international cooperation, promotes enhanced dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations, and helps to create an environment conducive to exchange of human experience".

Foreign ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) also met in Doha last June and adopted the NAM Ministerial Declaration, in which they

> "expressed the view that the promotion of a culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations and interreligious cooperation are some of the significant measures and approaches that could contribute towards international peace, security and harmony".

Another significant development was the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interfaith Dialogue held in Bali, Indonesia, on 21 and 22 July 2005 on the theme "Building interfaith harmony within the international community". ASEM membership comes from the European Union and South-East and North-East Asian countries. The Bali Declaration acknowledged the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation among United Nations initiatives in promoting the culture of peace, the inclusion of interfaith studies in post-elementary curricula, the education of grass-roots communities on pluralism and diversity and the need for close cooperation between Government and civil society sectors to share best practices and promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

The tripartite Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace was held in June at the United Nations, sponsored by 16 Governments, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and the 110-member Committee of Religious Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations. The outcome of that historic conference was circulated in document A/60/269, which I commend for transmittal by representatives to their capitals, to afford them the opportunity to consider its conclusions and recommendations.

The ASEAN Regional Forum, the only security-oriented organization in Asia, adopted a Chairman's statement on 29 July 2005 in Vientianne. The Ministers welcomed the enhancement of interfaith dialogues aimed at promoting mutual understanding and trust among people in the region.

At the margins of the world summit last month, an Informal Meeting of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace was held at United Nations Headquarters on 13 September 2005. The 15 participating leaders adopted a declaration highlighting mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing interreligious, intercultural and inter-civilizational initiatives, all designed to promote peace at the local, national, regional and international levels.

That informal summit on interfaith cooperation was followed by the Security Council summit, held on 14 September 2005, chaired by the President of the Philippines. At the summit the Council adopted its resolution 1624 (2005), which "[c]alls upon all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, in an effort to prevent the indiscriminate targeting of different religions and cultures" (*para. 3*).

There are equally significant initiatives at the regional and international levels, such as Pakistan's "enlightened moderation", endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference; the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, hosted by Kazakhstan; the 2006 world summit on Islamic-Christian dialogue to be held in Senegal; and, of course, the Alliance of Civilizations launched by the Secretary-General in July.

These developments are eloquent affirmations of the value of draft resolution A/60/L.4, which I commend for adoption by consensus. The draft resolution takes into account the growing universal clamour for dialogue to avert misunderstanding and conflict.

The draft resolution takes a step forward by recognizing the mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing linkages of the various interreligious, intercultural and inter-civilization initiatives for the promotion of peace. It also invites the Secretary-General to submit a report on ways to strengthen linkages and focus more on practical options in the implementation of the initiatives on interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace.

We are confident that the various interreligious, intercultural and inter-civilization initiatives will grow into a process or mechanism for conflict prevention and for the pacific settlement of disputes, a mechanism against terrorism and a mechanism for peace.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 25 countries of the European Union, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Iceland, Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the opportunity provided at the midpoint of this International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World to reaffirm the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (*resolution 53/243*).

The European Union also expresses its full support for the other ongoing related activities on interfaith and intercultural dialogue in this area, such as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action. Further, the European Union also welcomes the recent initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations, announced by the Secretary-General in July this year. The Permanent Representative of the Philippines, in his statement just a moment ago, listed many more such initiatives. Each one of these can contribute to the common platform of unity which the international community must build in order to challenge the growing forces of extremism and sectarianism, which threaten all our daily lives.

Who could have imagined at the start of this International Decade the challenges to a culture of peace that the world is facing today? As a counter to extremism and terrorism, we must choose to celebrate the values that unite us. In order to undermine those who seek to sow division and chaos we must strive to develop tolerant and inclusive societies. We must celebrate how diversity enriches our societies. We must improve understanding amongst faiths and cultures, and we must foster stronger respect between communities.

Respect, tolerance and dignity are cornerstones in creating the conditions for a safe, secure and peaceful world in which all can realize their full potential as human beings. Those principles of respect, tolerance and dignity are also intrinsic to developing a culture of peace, as outlined in article 3 of the Declaration.

Full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, for democracy and for the rule of law, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essential if we are to promote and protect those values

common to humanity. And whilst working to promote those aims, we must also defend against those who seek to undermine those values. We must act against those that incite and promote extremism. It is our duty to do so.

Governments need to work with and through their home communities. We must encourage and empower mainstream voices to challenge the extremists with a more powerful message, one that reaffirms our values of tolerance and respect. That effort must go hand in hand with work to tackle inequality, poverty and injustice. We must do more to improve opportunity, pursue good governance and entrench universal human rights. Making a practical difference in people's lives by promoting rights and ensuring their implementation can only help to support our pursuit of tolerance and peace.

Education has a critical role to play in this regard. Good-quality education provides a foundation for genuine dialogue among peoples. As the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled, "A world fit for children", reminds us, children are "resourceful citizens capable of helping to build a better future for all" (*resolution S-27/2, annex, para. 7*).

The European Union is committed to empowering children and young people to express themselves. In that regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (resolution 50/81, annex) and its five new priority areas. Across the European Union, there are an increasing number of youth programmes aimed at developing cooperation on a wide range of activities between young people in different member States and beyond. Bringing together young people from different backgrounds and from different countries helps combat negative prejudices and stereotypes. Young people are key to creating the tolerant society in which we all want to live. Young people must be considered part of the solution.

The European Union pays particular tribute to the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, a global network of young people and youth organizations active in the field of peacebuilding. Their work is an example to us all and evidence of the significant role that civil society can play in advancing a culture of peace. In that regard, the European Union welcomes the World Report on the Culture of Peace prepared by over 700 civil society organizations. It is an important contribution to assessing the review of progress made in the last five years.

Finally, the European Union pays tribute to the work of UNESCO as lead agency for the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. UNESCO's commitment to fostering a culture of peace in its fields of competence is as relevant now as ever, and we urge UNESCO to pursue greater synergy across the United Nations system in order to achieve visible results.

The European Union also pays particular tribute to UNESCO's work in elaborating the draft Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions. We welcome the adoption of that international Convention at the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference. We urge Member States to ratify it as early as possible.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Sixty years have passed since the United Nations was established, with — as it is expressed in the Preamble of the Charter — the determination "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours". And four years have now passed since the General Assembly adopted resolution 56/6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations", making the year 2001 the year of dialogue among civilizations.

Today, however, there are still problems that cause people everywhere great concern. Conflict and confrontation arising from racial or religious differences persist around the world. Globalization, which can bring different civilizations closer, contributes many benefits to society but can also give rise to intolerance among people when they come into contact with civilizations different from their own, without preparation. In order to deal with that unfortunate situation, it is of great importance to promote dialogue among peoples and civilizations, based on a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding.

At the 2005 world summit in September, leaders reaffirmed that all cultures and civilizations have contributed to the advancement of humankind. They acknowledged the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world and committed themselves to promoting a culture of peace and dialogue at the local, regional and international levels. It is our responsibility to achieve that goal. Japan, for its part, believes that

the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations has played a key role in the promotion of understanding among peoples and cultures around the world and has thus contributed to the further development of a culture of peace.

In that regard, my delegation highly commends UNESCO for the major role it played in implementing the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. UNESCO included the Global Agenda in its medium-term strategy for 2002-2007, with a view to achieving its strategic objective of safeguarding cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Within that framework, UNESCO has organized and sponsored a broad range of activities, conferences and meetings, such as the April 2005 International Conference on the Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures and Peoples in Paris, as well as regional symposiums and conferences on the dialogue among civilizations.

In that context, I welcome the adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions on 17 October by Commission IV of the 33rd UNESCO General Conference. We believe the Convention will protect and promote cultural diversity by providing a far-reaching framework. I believe that respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is one of the surest guarantees of development and peace.

Japan believes that, as affirmed by the report of the Secretary-General on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (A/60/259), of August 2005, a global partnership is urgently needed and that concrete action should be taken through practical initiatives to further promote dialogue among civilizations. Aside from the activities of UNESCO, Japan also welcomes the various initiatives promoted by Member States to implement the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. It welcomes, among other initiatives, the Alliance of Civilizations launched on 14 July 2005 by the Secretary-General.

Throughout its history, my country has been fortunate enough to be exposed to — and has accepted — various civilizations, such as those from China and India and, in modern times, Western civilization. Japan has been successful in coexisting with different cultures while maintaining its own identity. Japan, recognizing the great benefits of cultural diversity, attaches importance to interaction among people and acknowledges the importance of understanding each other's culture and civilization and of fostering mutual understanding through dialogue.

With that in mind, Japan attaches special importance to exchanges among young people, who will have leading roles in the international community in the new era. Through youth invitation schemes, such as the Global Youth Exchange Programme, Japan intends to make further efforts in promoting mutual understanding to transcend the differences in cultures and languages.

In January 2001, in response to the proclamation of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Japan launched a new initiative seeking to further enhance mutual understanding between Japan and Islamic countries, as part of the effort to promote dialogue among civilizations. Since then, Japan has actively undertaken a series of efforts to deepen understanding among cultures and civilizations through dialogues such as the Japan-Middle East Cultural Exchanges and Dialogue Mission, the Arab-Japan Dialogue Forum and seminars on the dialogue among civilizations between the Islamic world and Japan.

Based on the experience accumulated through those culture- and region-specific dialogues, Japan decided to organize a conference with a much broader perspective. At the Asian-African Summit in April 2005, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stated that it was critical to share our experiences and our knowledge through dialogues between civilizations, cultures and individuals. To that end, he offered to host the World Civilization Forum so that all countries might share their experiences and preserve their traditions, while, at the same time, advancing their own modernization.

At that Forum, held in July 2005 in Tokyo, Professor Amartya Sen, the Forum's chairman, pointed out, in his opening address at the Forum, that distinctions solely based on civilizations made little sense, because we are defined by a variety of concerns and thus cannot be reduced to a single set of features. Instead, we must see the richness of the human condition. He argued that, in that sense, the Forum was not about a dialogue among civilizations, but about a global dialogue among people striving to address the problems and the grievances of the world. The Forum provided an opportunity for Governments, private

enterprise, academia and civil society to share a common awareness of the issues and to form networks to promote interaction in serious discussions on today's situation. Japan acknowledges the absolute virtue of dialogue and peace and, accordingly, would like to continue its efforts to promote them.

In the years to come, we will have to continue our labours, in close cooperation with each other, to expand dialogue and exchange views among civilizations. I would therefore like to conclude my statement by reiterating that Japan is determined to redouble its efforts to bring about a culture of peace.

Mr. Elbadri (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): A number of international events have stressed the importance of the culture of peace, which consists of the thought, the values, the codes of conduct that are based on respect for peace and human rights and other fundamental values that we have adopted as a way of life. The culture of peace is no longer a political luxury; it has become a political necessity. It is necessary for security, as well as being a human responsibility. That is the true essence of the concept of collective security, which must begin with us, as individuals and representative of our peoples and Governments.

We must respect the lofty human values reflected in the international legal frameworks that we have created to govern international relations. They must be based on equality and common standards that can provide real security for all peoples and all countries. Peace can be built on the basis of a balance between rights and obligations.

There can be no peace without communication among religions, cultures and civilizations and without respect on the part of peoples and Governments for the cultures and the fundamental rights of others. We must realize that we live in a world that has a civilizational continuum — a world in which our differences are a key element of our diversity. We have one human heritage, but culturally, civilizationally and intellectually we are very diverse.

Despite the various contributions to the human heritage made by a number of civilizations, we must take into account in particular the contributions made by the Islamic civilization. In recent years, there have been many initiatives in that respect, and there are prominent indications that global awareness is growing, as evidenced by the adoption of the 2001 Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations contained in General Assembly resolution 56/6, as well as the Secretary-General's declaration of the Alliance of Civilizations last July.

If we approach such initiatives in a sincere manner, we will all be able to benefit from the dialogue among civilizations and cultures within an effective institutional international framework, based on clarity of vision, objectives and means.

We believe profoundly in the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations with a view to strengthening world peace and building bridges between peoples. However, such dialogue must be based on a number of basic elements and pillars, including respect for cultural and intellectual diversity and specificity and religious differences among others. It must rely on dialogue as the foundation to enhance such respect for the uniqueness of others. Such dialogue must be aimed at strengthening our common values and common heritage through cooperation and integration, so as to arrive at a cultural and religious rapprochement, which can provide a solid foundation for progress. We must also expand the basis of that dialogue to supplement traditional frameworks, including at the intergovernmental and inter-academic levels.

People must be brought closer together, along with all stakeholders and sectors, as the report of the Secretary-General makes clear. We must avoid the politicization of the dialogue among peoples and civilizations. The dialogue should not be used in the service of political causes, nor should different yardsticks and selectivity be used. Policies must be aimed at bringing people together, rather than at pushing them apart.

We must remember the primacy of religion. All religions try to elevate and glorify human beings. We must not stigmatize any religion, or consider that one particular religion might lead to more violence and terror than another. We know that the universal message of all religions is tolerance and respect for and protection of life and dignity.

The role of States at the national level is the key to enhancing the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. Egypt made clear its acceptance of the culture of peace on several occasions before recognizing it at the international level. Egypt was the first State to reach out towards peace in the Middle East through President Anwar Sadat's 1977 peace

initiative, since we believe that peace is the very foundation of coexistence. That initiative was the starting point of the various peace processes in the Middle East, which are continuing, despite various problems and obstacles in recent years.

In that context, Egypt was one of the first States to adopt the Global Agenda and Programme of Action for a dialogue among civilizations adopted by the General Assembly, and major efforts and progress have been made to implement that Programme of Action, particularly by enhancing educational programmes in Egypt to strengthen the culture of peace, freedom, tolerance, and human rights and to consolidate the principles of democracy, pluralism and fundamental freedoms and to expand the participatory basis of all peoples in the implementation of our national programmes and goals.

Egypt was also a forerunner in the process of enhancing the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations in the Arab region through its very active role in the League of Arab States. The Library of Alexandria is a very important institution in terms of enhancing the dialogue among civilizations and respect for democracy and human rights. That Library received the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation award, whose goals include projecting the common heritage of the Mediterranean region by strengthening links and dialogue between the north and the south of the Mediterranean Sea.

With regard to the Secretary-General's optimistic report on the implementation of the Programme of Action relating to the dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace and the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which contains many constructive proposals, further efforts are required on the international level in order to consolidate the foundations of the culture of peace. Many regions of the world are still involved in war or are under foreign occupation. Many people are suffering from poverty, hunger and disease, and many are subject to unfair international economic and trade practices that fail to take into account the needs and requirements of the developing countries, despite the acknowledgement of the firm interrelation between development and security.

Likewise, democracy is often implemented within States, but seldom at the international level. Thus we must revisit our practices and conduct, enhance mutual understanding and joint work in order to reverse the current trend.

Egypt hopes that someday the world will realize that the year 2000 was not the only year during which the Culture of Peace should be observed, and that 21 September should not be considered the only day to commemorate peace each year. We believe that every year must be a Year of the Culture of Peace and that every single day must be a celebration of a just and comprehensive peace, based on respect for the rights, beliefs and cultures of others. This is the only genuine choice that we have in order to be able to provide a better future for generations to come.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset and on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for the valuable information contained in his report, which will certainly strengthen our debate on this item. I also would like to express our appreciation to UNESCO for its fine efforts aimed at safeguarding our cultural diversity and encouraging dialogue among civilizations.

In spite of the recommendations agreed on by the heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit five years ago concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations aimed at eliminating differences, conflicts and obstacles among peoples and nations of the world, and reaffirmed in September 2005, ethnic and religious intolerance and extremism and violence continue to be among the major challenges that lead to hotbeds of tension, armed conflicts and violations of human rights in many countries of the world. This situation makes initiatives for dialogue among civilizations even more important, as are political and diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving greater understanding and rapprochement among peoples, and at spreading the best human practices, foremost among which are the principles of understanding, tolerance, solidarity and cooperation. All forms of extremism and hatred should be cast aside.

If we look at recent historical events, especially those of the last two decades, we find that, despite the end of the cold war and reduced conflict between East and West, we now have new conflicts that have emerged owing to ethnic, religious and cultural

competition among peoples, as well as between North and South and rich and poor. This situation poses a great threat to international peace, security and stability and places the responsibility for bridging the wide gap among civilizations on the shoulders of all States, religious leaders and other leaders in the social, scientific, and cultural arenas.

We affirm that violence and terror, ethnic cleansing practices and other horrors and war witnessed in many areas of the world in recent years clearly indicate that their perpetrators do not belong to one particular nationality, religion or race, but have varied origins and various political, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, we are deeply concerned about the continued campaigns of discrimination, hostility and distortion that many Western media agencies are engaged in against certain ethnic and religious groups. We consider these campaigns a main source of hatred and discrimination among peoples and civilizations. Accordingly, as a first step, we call upon States and their media to ensure objectivity and transparency in handling issues and crises pertaining to developing States, and to adopt serious measures to confront all hostile, provocative and discriminatory practices committed against peoples, especially the peoples of the Islamic and Arab States.

The economic and development benefits of globalization achieved during the last two decades and enjoyed by many countries have contributed to bringing developing countries under the influence of Western media and advanced technology, making most members of the younger generation in developing countries less connected to the specificities of the cultural diversity of their own societies. Therefore, since we believe in the importance of continued interaction and diversity between civilizations, we ask institutions in the developed States to cease their monopoly over modern technology, discontinue their unilateral policies, understand the concerns and issues of other peoples and nations, and refrain from interference in their internal affairs and from denying their national rights.

We also demand that all initiatives calling for promoting dialogue among civilizations include serious and effective measures aimed at resolving problems of colonialism and foreign occupation and reducing the gap between developed and developing countries, especially in the areas of poverty, development and clean and safe environment. In addition, measures should also include plans to achieve development through the unconditional liberalization of trade and by giving the developing countries access to the latest production technologies so that opportunities for development are available for their people. That would narrow the gap between these countries and developed ones.

This should be achieved within a framework based on the principles of justice, transparency, equality among peoples and respect for the dignity, beliefs and inalienable rights of human beings, and rejecting any double standards still practised to this day with regard to issues and interests of other States.

The United Arab Emirates, guided by the traditions and customs of its Arab society and the principles of Islamic heritage, such as diversity, has followed appropriate policies based on two parallel principles. The first includes the adoption of educational, cultural and social programs aimed at reinforcing its humanitarian and moral values among all social groups in order to ensure better participation in national development programmes and the enjoyment of prosperity, while protecting them from spreading social, psychological, health and cultural ills. The second principle aims at developing these values and concepts and employing them in accordance with the requirements of modern times, without altering their essence. It also aims at strengthening, among our citizens, the concepts of mutual respect for other cultures, traditions and beliefs. These principles were articulated in a speech given by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan two days ago in his meeting with Muslim religious leaders to celebrate the month of Ramadan. In his speech, he stressed the importance of showing Islam's tolerance and its noble values, which are based on compassion, brotherhood, tolerance and respect for other religions, and which call for virtuous deeds and the consolidation of the values of justice, love, peace and good for others.

The United Arab Emirates has also promulgated laws and decisions to ensure freedom of religious, cultural and social activities and traditions for foreign minorities living in the country. In addition, it encourages cultural events, such as seminars, workshops, exhibitions, which include as participants intellectuals, journalists, artists, musicians, folklore troupes and so forth from all over the world, in order to enrich our society's openness and knowledge of the

diversity of other cultures, ideas and concepts, while maintaining our own distinctive cultural environment.

The United Arab Emirates has entered a number of bilateral, regional and international agreements and memorandums of understanding relating to cooperation in the fields of cultural exchange, education and media. It has also participated in international conferences and forums on cultural and intellectual issues, which have contributed to the enhancement of its interaction and cooperation with other civilizations.

In conclusion, we hope that our deliberations will constitute a step forward in strengthening dialogue among civilizations as a new approach and mechanism for international relations, building bridges of understanding, cooperation and openness among countries and inspiring joint efforts to reinforce peace and security and the peaceful coexistence of peoples and future generations.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Today, the Assembly is considering two important subjects in this joint debate on agenda items 42 and 43.

The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, has entered its fifth year, and I wish to thank the Government of Bangladesh for bringing that initiative to the agenda of the General Assembly.

During this meeting, the Assembly is also reviewing the progress of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action adopted in 2001 (resolution 56/6), for which we owe our gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Pakistan has had a long association with those two initiatives and has traditionally been a sponsor of the two draft resolutions introduced by Bangladesh and Iran under those agenda items.

We are thankful to the Secretary-General for his reports on the two agenda items.

The Declaration on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243), adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 1999, sets out a set of values, attitudes and behaviours. That historic document is based on the principles of multilateral cooperation in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, respect for life, the ending of violence and the promotion and the practice of non-violence through education, dialogue, cooperation and commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

In our globalized world, there is increased interaction among all cultures and civilizations. That has given rise to new forms of exchange and understanding among peoples across the regions and has created unprecedented opportunities for the transmission of ideas.

However, the great paradox of today's world is that, while it has brought people closer and created vast networks of connectivity and interdependence, it has also spawned divisions and frictions among and within societies. Many of those divisions and frictions are manifested in religious tones.

The proliferation of sources and channels of information, instead of promoting a better understanding among peoples, have reinforced stereotypes and deepened misperceptions. Despite the surfeit of instantly available information, the gulf of misunderstanding among faiths and civilizations seems to have grown wider. There is both a knowledge deficit and an understanding deficit.

Many would agree that the root causes of friction among cultures and civilizations are not primarily religious. The central message of all religions is almost identical. The root cause of friction is not a clash of civilization but often a clash of political and economic interests. Clearly, responses to conflicting political interests are often cast in religious terms, but that is only an expedient disguise used by those pursuing narrow political and national objectives.

The need to promote cooperation and understanding among religions and cultures is therefore a contemporary imperative. Ethnicity, religion, culture, language and race must not be allowed to become a source of division. We must reassert our common humanity and our common universal values. We must pursue dialogue among different faiths and build bridges of friendship, understanding and cooperation to ameliorate the sufferings of those who are the victims of intolerance, discrimination, oppression and injustice.

There is increasing recognition of the several initiatives put forth by certain Member States in recent years to bridge the emerging divide between religions, cultures and civilizations. The proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran for a dialogue among civilizations,

Pakistan's proposal for enlightened moderation, the initiative on interfaith cooperation for peace by the Philippines and the proposal for an alliance of civilizations recently launched by Spain and Turkey are mutually reinforcing and seek to promote universal human welfare, freedom and progress. All those initiatives can serve as instruments to eliminate misunderstandings among faiths and cultures and as an antidote to the notion of a clash of civilizations.

We therefore agree with the recommendation in the note by the Secretary-General on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (A/60/279), that a global framework should be promoted to integrate the various objectives of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243 A and B).

There is a need to develop coordination machinery at the national, regional and international levels to strengthen cooperation among all relevant actors: the United Nations system, Member States, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Any endeavour to promote interfaith harmony and cooperation at the international level needs to cover political, social, economic, religious and cultural and institutional aspects. The way forward is to foster mutual understanding and concentrate resources on human development, poverty alleviation, education and social justice.

At the political level, interfaith harmony requires the rectification of the political injustices to which so many people are often subjected on account of their faith or beliefs.

Pakistan has sought to promote religious tolerance, understanding and cooperation within the United Nations for several years. At its fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions, the General Assembly adopted Pakistan's resolution on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, which emphasizes, inter alia, the need to strengthen freedom, justice, tolerance, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures and religions, which are all important elements for building international peace and security.

This year, Pakistan will again introduce under this agenda item a draft resolution highlighting the principles that enhance human well-being and freedom by uniting our efforts to secure universal peace. It is our hope that the General Assembly will once again adopt by consensus Pakistan's draft resolution on promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation. That would demonstrate our collective resolve to promote peace, prosperity and hope for all and our categorical rejection of intolerance, hate and discrimination.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly's commitment to promoting a culture of peace is justified by the fact that the current state of the world remains marked by armed conflicts, the persistent threat of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms and light weapons. Those scourges distance us from the goal of peace, which inspired the founders of the Organization.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Secretary-General reminds us of this when he rightly stresses in his Report on the Work of the Organization that the violent internal conflicts that still persist the world over cause millions of civilian victims, result in spillover to neighbouring countries and heighten the threat to peace and international security. And yet, faithful to its commitment to preserve future generations from the scourge of war, the United Nations has consistently attempted to prevent conflicts, to settle them and to build peace. The many, costly peacekeeping operations under way in the world, particularly in Africa, seek to secure peace through the disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former combatants and through the organization of elections in some countries. They illustrate the key role that the United Nations plays in this area.

At the regional level, and particularly in Africa, our countries are setting up structures that can promote and strengthen peace, as apparent in the establishment by the African Union of a Peace and Security Council, as well as the African Peer Review Mechanism, institutions that function and express the desire of Africa to take control of its own destiny.

The determination of the international community to strengthen and promote peace and security should, however, not make us lose sight of how important it is to further strengthen bonds among the principle organs

of the United Nations, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on the one hand, and between the United Nations and regional organizations on the other, in order to move forward in achieving peace for the peoples of the world.

In this connection, the decision of the High-level Plenary Meeting to create a Peacebuilding Commission is a considerable achievement, and the delegation of Togo hopes that the consultations begun by the General Assembly will lead to making the Commission operational.

The ongoing quest for a peace-loving world is truly appropriate during the Decade for the Culture of Peace proclaimed in 2001. Togo welcomes the many activities conducted under the aegis of UNESCO at the international and national levels, actions described thoroughly in the report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/279*). Among the many activities occurring under the auspices of the United Nations system, we cite in particular the UNESCO public awareness campaign — UNESCO being the coordinator of the programme for the Decade — which has increased awareness of the idea that the culture of peace goes hand in hand with the dialogue among civilizations. This is particularly the case following the horrendous act of terrorism of 11 September 2001 in the United States.

Likewise, within countries, UNESCO's communities should continue to strive to ensure that peoples heed the values of tolerance, respect for others, cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence. Thus, we are happy to see that this debate is taking place a few days after UNESCO's adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions. Furthermore, we should like to emphasize that the information and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report make it possible to move forward towards a culture of peace between now and the end of the decade in 2010.

As is well known, actions carried out or initiated by the United Nations system in cooperation with States, particularly in the spheres of education, the promotion of human rights and democracy, have a chance to succeed only if they have the support of the Governments of our countries. As far as Togo is concerned, we can never repeat often enough that the authorities of Togo have always considered the quest for peace, within as well as outside of the country, the very foundation of our country's policy.

Thus, a few months ago, after his election as leader of our country, His Excellency Faure Gnassingbé took the decision to create a Commission of Reflection on and Rehabilitation of Togo's History. Any observer knowledgeable of political life in Togo can recognize that this commission will make it possible to rehabilitate all those who have played a decisive role in the political history of Togo. For the Government of Togo, the establishment of such a commission is the key stage in enhancing the national reconciliation and unity of our country.

Apart from preventing war, the culture of peace should also be construed as a culture whose goal is to ensure the well-being of the peoples of our countries. Indeed, in our world, where more than half of the population still survives on less than a dollar a day, a world where poverty and misery strike large numbers of men, women and children and prevent them from meeting their very basic and fundamental needs, we can understand quite easily that for those wretched of the earth, peace means first and foremost, living without want.

In this connection, the delegation of Togo hopes that the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, which was reaffirmed strongly by the High-level Plenary of the General Assembly, will receive the support needed, which our countries are entitled to expect from their development partners. Thus, convinced that the success of the Decade of the Culture of Peace depends on the same factors, Togo has this year become a sponsor of the draft resolution just introduced by Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the delegation of Togo should like to recall that peace is a form of behaviour that must consistently reflect moral values such as justice, tolerance, mutual understanding and a heightened sense of the need to share. We believe that the true meaning of the Decade for Peace is to be found in the practice of these values.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): With the proclamation of 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the international community took an important step forward in the interests of peace, stability and security. That is why the Republic of Belarus supports and encourages the concept of dialogue among civilizations. The globalization of the

world and the new threats and challenges increasingly remind us of how multifaceted is the interdependence between peoples and countries in various areas of human activity, including the environment, health care, the economy, culture and security.

Today's world reminds the international community of the need to unite our efforts and develop global partnerships, primarily through a deeper appreciation of the value of diversity of civilizations and of diverse paths to progress. It is on the basis of that understanding that the delegation of Belarus joins the sponsors of draft resolution A/60/L.6, entitled "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations".

We are pleased that the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations is attracting increasing interest from Member States, international organizations and civil society. The holding of an increasing number of dialogue-related events — such as cultural festivals, exchange programmes, joint projects and conferences in the areas of education, science and culture — promotes a better understanding among peoples and encourages a culture of peace.

The establishment of the Alliance of Civilizations may lend additional impetus to the popularization of an approach based on a dialogue among civilizations. We expect the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to play an active role and welcome its efforts for a dialogue among civilizations.

For each country it is crucial that the achievements of its national culture — in all its diversity of shape, character and style — become known beyond its borders. That helps mutual understanding and tolerance and promotes dialogue among civilizations. Mutual understanding among States is possible only when the representatives of one ethnic group know about and respect the culture, traditions and customs of others.

With each passing year, Belarus is steadily proving to be a forum for important international festivals, arts competitions, exhibitions and meetings for representatives of the artistic community. Belarus also attaches great importance to the commemoration of milestones and significant events in our history that portray mutual interaction and complementarity of cultures. This year, Belarus instituted a special prize on promoting peace and mutual understanding through art, which is awarded to individuals involved in culture and art, as well as to creative groups and organizations, who have made a significant contribution to strengthening international cultural cooperation and have highlighted the achievements and models of a global arts culture based on humane ideals and values.

Our delegation agrees with Secretary-General that it is essential to promote the idea of dialogue among civilizations directly at the local level, so that it can produce tangible results and be important for the entire international community.

The distinguishing feature of the cultural landscape in Belarus is the presence in our country of more than 140 ethnic cultures and peoples: Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars and others. Those cultures have historical roots in Belarus, as well as their own destinies and distinguishing features. While retaining their national diversity, taken together, they are part of our overall national cultural heritage. The Government's cultural policy protects the natural coexistence and interaction among cultures and among ethnic communities with Belarusian culture. It guarantees the free development of national and ethnic groups among the country's population and seeks to allow them both free expression of their specific cultural orientation and integration into the our larger, common culture. The Government supports cultural, spiritual and linguistic ties between citizens from other national origins and the countries of their forebears.

In conclusion, the delegation of Belarus would like to proclaim its firm support for the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations as the basis for the establishment and strengthening of mutual understanding and trust among countries and peoples.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today the General Assembly resumes its consideration of the dialogue among civilizations so as to evaluate the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted four years ago. Our discussion this year also coincides with the mid-term global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace, which is a natural outcome of the dialogue.

The United Nations is the best forum for a dialogue among civilizations and the establishment of new norms in international relations. UNESCO has carried out a wide range of seminars and conferences in order to spread and strengthen dialogue. There are many items and draft resolutions on the Assembly's agenda for the sixtieth session that call for dialogue,

interaction and tolerance, among others: the draft resolution on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/L.6*), the draft resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/L.5*), a draft resolution on human rights and cultural diversity and the draft resolution on the promotion of interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace (*A/60/L.4*).

If we look around us we will surely find that we are governed by dialogue and interaction. Civilizations and cultures are diverse and numerous, as are languages and races. Those differences are an indisputable reality, and they make dialogue indispensable. Dialogue among civilizations means an acknowledgement of differences vis-à-vis others and an acceptance of those differences.

Differences are at the heart of dialogue. One cannot really envision a dialogue between two similar entities. Dialogue means dealing with diversity and difference as a source of enrichment, not as a source of danger. Dialogue among civilizations aims to achieve interaction and complementarity. It does not necessarily mean trying to integrate or erase the other. Dialogue means affirming the existence of the other, who is by definition different. It does not mean trying to eliminate or alienate that other.

Dialogue means an acknowledgement that our ownership of the truth is relative. Truth cannot be the sole property of any one civilization or culture. It is the joint property of all civilizations.

Accordingly, we should always try to see the good in others so we can benefit from it. We should always examine our shortcomings so we can correct them. Dialogue means tolerance. It does not mean the powerful imposing their will on the weak; it means listening to others. That way, the weak and the vulnerable will feel that the powerful do listen to them, and the powerful will feel the obligation to explain and justify their position to others.

In his report on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*), the Secretary-General notes that the Lebanese Ministry of Education informed the Secretariat of the actions taken by the Lebanese Government to encourage dialogue among civilizations. In Lebanon, such a dialogue is not merely a slogan or a principle. It is a reality we experience and live every day. Dialogue is evident in the diverse religious and cultural arenas. The will of Muslims and Christians to coexist is what makes Lebanon a model for coming together. That fact led to the observation by the late Pope John Paul II that Lebanon is more than a country; Lebanon is a message.

In the context of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, the Ninth Summit of la Francophonie, held in Lebanon from 18 to 20 October 2002, adopted the Beirut Declaration on the dialogue of cultures. The Declaration calls for thematic dialogues on issues such as our openness to ideas different from our own, the appreciation of differences and distinctions, and the search for common and shared values.

Our fulfilment of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations depends on our resolve, as peoples of the United Nations, to fulfil the commitment set out in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter: to practice tolerance and live in peace with one another as good neighbours. That way, the enemy of yesterday will become the friend of today, and the friend of today will be tomorrow's ally.

Mr. Mutahar (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, years after the adoption of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, we underline the importance of respect for human rights and basic freedoms for all, regardless of race, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, financial situation, place of birth or any other condition. Now, we must redouble our efforts to improve international human rights conditions.

In recent years we have stressed the importance of establishing international standards and mechanisms for ethical and legal human rights frameworks in order to overcome historical and cultural differences so that human rights and respect for human dignity are held as superior values governing all nations.

Although efforts have been made, human rights violations remain a grave concern for all because of their horrendous and serious nature. We continue to hear of cases of racial discrimination and violence against vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the handicapped, as well as acts of murder, detentions and extrajudicial killings. While the international community has given the issue significant attention, it is not enough. We need cooperation at all levels to raise public awareness and spread the culture of human rights among all members of society. In that

context, in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (*resolution 60/1*), heads of State and Government emphasized the need to promote human rights education at all levels and encouraged States to develop awareness initiatives in that respect.

Since its unification on 22 May 1990, Yemen has attached great importance to the issues of human rights and private and public freedoms. That concern is embodied in laws that have been enacted, beginning with the constitution, and is reflected in Yemen's signing and ratification of international and regional human rights agreements and conventions.

As a sign of the importance that the Republic of Yemen attaches to human rights, we have created a Ministry for Human Rights, part of the executive branch of Government. The Ministry is currently headed by a woman. Its main goals include the proposal of plans, policies, programmes and measures that guarantee the promotion of human rights; plans to educate citizens on their legal rights under the constitution and State laws; to spread a human rights culture throughout society by various means of public education; to cooperate with civil society human rights organizations, involving them in the discussion of national reports on human rights conventions; and to organize activities and educational awareness efforts on human rights issues.

Yemen was among the first States to ratify the human rights treaties and agreements and actively seeks to incorporate the provisions of those treaties into Yemeni laws, making them no mere words on paper but concretely implemented law. As part of those efforts, the Republic of Yemen formulates national plans incorporating the awareness and the promotion of a culture of peace and human rights. Those plans include Yemen's Strategic Vision through 2025, the national strategy for youth integration, the national strategy for literacy and adult education, the gender strategy in agriculture and food security and the national population plan for 2001-2020.

Yemeni society has been characterized by moral and religious tolerance since ancient times. Those values have their origin in the Islamic faith, which prohibits discrimination and separation and encourages brotherhood and peace. In Yemen, we have a Jewish minority that enjoys the rights and duties of Yemeni citizenship and full freedom to practice their religious rights and rituals, as established by the constitution. The Government of Yemen has also given attention to media, cultural and religious discourse, including journalism and the media, and encourages scholars, preachers, university professors and religious seminars and educators to properly explain the doctrines and the benevolent views of Islam. In that context, the Ministry of Education has unified the curriculum in primary and secondary education throughout the country. Religious schools have also become part of the public education system in order to unify ideas among all segments of Yemeni society and to avoid fanaticism and extremism.

We should also point out that the political leadership in Yemen has paid special attention to the culture of peace and has sought to provide living examples that show tolerance and brotherhood to Yemeni youth. These include amnesty for the 16 individuals who began the war of separation in 1994 and all of those who took part in that war, as well as invitations for them to return to the country and to take part in its reconstruction. Also included is the release of all detainees who were imprisoned in the aftermath of the riots that took place in Yemen in 2004, and allowing members of the family that ruled prior to the Yemeni revolution to return and to be compensated for the loss of their property.

In its fight against extremism, Yemen depends on dialogue with the extremists in order to spread the culture of peace and to enlighten them in Islamic values that call for tolerance and brotherhood. In that context, we held an international seminar in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, from 18 to 22 September, organized by Bridges among Cultures.

Concerning foreign relations, Yemen believes in the principle of peaceful coexistence among nations, and has proved beyond a doubt that its policy is in line with that principle. This can be seen in its resolution through peaceful means of its border conflicts with its neighbours.

The principles of human rights are mandatory. We must implement them and make certain that our commitment to the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will not affect the cultural specificities of each State.

In conclusion, we emphasize that international resolutions must maintain neutrality and avoid double standards and selectivity when dealing with human rights issues.

Ms. Ng Yen Yen (Malaysia): First and foremost, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the promotion of interreligious dialogue (*A/60/201*) and the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*), and the note of the Secretary-General on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/279*).

The desire for peace has always run parallel to the innate nature of human beings to battle against one another. Our modern history has witnessed two horrible world wars that brought untold sorrow and suffering to humankind. In order to save succeeding generations from the scourge of such wars, the United Nations was founded with the solemn determination to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another.

It is disheartening to note that recent tragic events — from the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and the Madrid and London bombings, to the latest incident in Bali — have further exacerbated the widening gap among civilizations and generated a negative perspective of Islam, particularly among non-Muslims in the West and elsewhere. There is a dire need to correct the misconception that acts of terrorism are sanctioned by any particular religion or culture. Terrorism must be attributed to the perpetrators and not the religion they profess. It is totally unjustifiable to associate terrorism with any particular race or religion. The root causes of any act of terrorism must be carefully examined in order to effectively address and combat terrorism.

The international community must recognize the importance of engaging communities in the promotion of religious and cultural understanding and of eliminating all forms of religious intolerance. However, it is regrettable that these issues are being approached within the narrow perspective of a subset of the larger debate on counter-terrorism. This represents a superficial manner of dealing with the real issues.

Realizing that ominous trend, Malaysia supports initiatives such as the culture of peace, dialogue among civilizations, and interfaith dialogues, which are important international efforts to promote mutual understanding and cooperation through intercultural, inter-civilizational and interreligious programmes. We believe that positive interaction among peoples of diverse cultures and values would contribute to the attainment of global peace and stability, which are essential for the achievement of sustainable economic and social development.

In Malaysia, we live in a national setting which is multireligious, multiethnic and multicultural. Islam, the official religion, and other religions and faiths, coexist in a tolerant environment. The Government has embarked on a programme to communicate a proper appreciation of Islam as a force for good and progress that emphasizes development consistent with the tenets of Islam, and focuses on enhancing the quality of life. We call that approach "Islam Hadari" or "civilizational Islam", which has been promoted by the Prime Minister of Malaysia since 2004. Through that approach, Malaysia has successfully managed its multiracial and multireligious society in a fair manner.

Civil society in Malaysia has also embarked on various initiatives to promote a culture of peace and interreligious dialogue, of which I would mention only a few. In April 2002 and March 2003, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia initiated an interfaith dialogue in Kuala Lumpur, attended by representatives of major religious groups in Malaysia. Another effort by Malaysian civil society has been the establishment of the People's Alliance for Peace Malaysia, or Peace Malaysia, which is active in peace and humanitarian aid activities. The work of Peace Malaysia has become global in reach and includes aid for tsunami victims in Indonesia and Sri Lanka and earthquake victims in Pakistan, as well as support for the rights of the Palestinian people.

At the international level, Malaysia hosted the inaugural meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's Commission of Eminent Persons, from 27 to 29 January 2005 in Putrajaya — the federal administrative capital. The meeting outlined proposals for cross-cultural and interreligious dialogue, including through regional and multilateral organizations. Malaysia will also organize the third Asia Europe Meeting ministerial conference on cultures and civilizations in Kuala Lumpur in 2007.

My delegation is describing Malaysia's experience in order to emphasize the point that there is a national as well as an international dimension to the issue of the peaceful and cooperative coexistence of religions, cultures and civilizations. Malaysia believes

that if Governments succeed in establishing a culture of tolerance and moderation among people at the national level, it will be easy for States to cooperate in promoting tolerance and moderation among nationalities and cultures at the international level and thus achieve global peace.

Mr. Lwin (Myanmar): At the outset, I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the promotion of interreligious dialogue (*A/60/201*) and commend the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its report on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (*A/60/279*).

At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/15, which proclaimed 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The following year, the General Assembly, in resolution 53/25, added momentum to the promotion of the culture of peace by including the issue of children, and proclaimed the decade 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The special importance that the international community attaches to the culture of peace was underscored in the historic Millennium Declaration. This year is the midpoint of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. It is, indeed, an opportune time to review the progress that we have made in the past five years.

The world is facing serious, new challenges today. Conflicts in various parts of the world, terrorism and transnational crime, which respect no borders, have serious negative consequences on development, peace and security. To meet the new challenges, we must work together cooperatively. We must acknowledge the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity. We must promote the culture of peace. In fact, the promotion of a culture of peace is very important as we strive to achieve universal peace.

The United Nations has played a leading role in maintaining and promoting a culture of peace, through the adoption of international instruments, declarations and plans of action.

Myanmar attaches special importance to promoting a culture of peace, which we implement at the national level and in our relations with our neighbours. Myanmar shares common borders with five countries, including the two most populous nations in the world, China and India. It is our adherence to mutual respect and the understanding of different cultures and traditions that enables us to have peaceful and friendly relations with all our neighbours. We also have a strong resolve to maintain and further strengthen our amicable relationships not only with our immediate neighbours but also with all the countries of the world.

Myanmar is home to more than 100 national races. The Government attaches great importance to national unity and the maintenance of peace and stability. Having had to face the scourge of insurgency for more than 50 years, Myanmar greatly values peace and stability. Understanding and mutual respect have played an important role in the Government's successful efforts to bring 17 armed insurgent groups into the legal fold. With peace and stability now prevailing in almost all parts of the country, the Government is able to help bring development to the border areas. In order to strengthen ties and promote the economic and social development of national races inhabiting the border areas, the Government has implemented a border area development programme. It has spent 65 billion kyats and more than $550 million in infrastructure development, including communication networks and education and health facilities, thus enhancing the quality of life of the inhabitants. We strongly believe that meaningful poverty alleviation contributes to the realization of the culture of peace.

In promoting the culture of peace, respect for and understanding of different religions and cultures is very important. While Theravada Buddhism is the religion of the majority of people in Myanmar, other religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism coexist and flourish. It is common in Myanmar to find people of one faith celebrating joyously and harmoniously in the festivals of other religions. Religious feast days of all religions are calendar holidays, and senior leaders of the country participate in the observance of those religious ceremonies. Thus, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the former Independent Expert on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar, cited the country as a model society for religious tolerance.

It is fitting that the issue of children has been linked to the issue of a culture of peace. Children are our future. We believe that children who grow up in a

peaceful environment can build a brighter future as they become the leaders of tomorrow. That is why, in creating a world fit for children, in Myanmar we have strived for and attained peace and stability. We have also set out a national plan of action for the promotion, protection and development of children. We also attach importance to promoting human rights. We believe in educating our children at an early stage and have included human rights education in school curricula nationwide.

The decade's priority theme for 2005 is equality between women and men, in the context of the conclusion of the Beijing Plus 10 process. In Myanmar, we have made great strides in fostering gender equality.

The women of Myanmar enjoy equal rights with men with regard to inheritance and divorce. A unique feature of Myanmar culture is that women retain their maiden names even after marriage. Myanmar women have specific claims of ownership to a husband's property. Moreover, Myanmar women, regardless of race or religion, enjoy equal rights under national laws.

To fulfil the commitments undertaken at Beijing, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs was established in July 1996. To give further impetus to the promotion of the role of women, the protection of women's rights and the economic empowerment of women, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation was formed in December 2003 as an umbrella organization for the many non-governmental organizations working for the overall development of women.

My delegation fully shares the view that all religions, cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. We firmly believe that the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among diverse religions through understanding, respect and tolerance would go a long way in bringing peace and harmony worldwide. It is a worthy endeavour that will benefit present and future generations. It is an endeavour in which we are firmly resolved to take active part.

Mr. Gruetter (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland thanks the Secretary-General for his informative report on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (*A/60/259*), and welcomes the draft resolution proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran that seeks to further intensify the dialogue among civilizations. Switzerland also supports the Secretary-General's initiative on an Alliance of Civilizations, which was launched on the initiative of the Spanish and Turkish Governments.

Mutual understanding among cultures is indispensable for the peaceful coexistence of different civilizations. Switzerland, as a country made up of different cultures and religions, has had to learn how to coexist peacefully in its small territory. It has had to overcome differences of religious denomination, language and economic interests in order to create national unity while respecting diversity. Its history has been marked by violent confrontations between members of different religious denominations. Those confrontations ended a century and a half ago, thanks largely to a common determination to concentrate on ideas that united the different communities in practice, rather than focusing on those that set them apart in theory. The prerequisite for that success was respect for difference, and the conviction that every potential conflict can be resolved by dialogue. Democratic consultation, strong measures to protect minorities and constant efforts to achieve compromise were indispensable tools in the construction of our country.

My reason for reflecting on my country's experience is to try to draw a number of general conclusions. First, diversity can be a benefit only if the appreciation of difference is not used to overlook political, economic and cultural biases and injustices.

Secondly, mutual respect and tolerance are indispensable for the peaceful coexistence of different groups in society.

Thirdly, mutual respect on the basis of shared human values only develops within a democratic political and legal framework that respects minorities and is based on the rule of law. The active participation of minorities in political debate and decision-making is vital to avoid a situation in which democracy degenerates into a tyranny of the majority.

Fourthly, even if, on the one hand, the invocation of shared values is often not enough in and of itself to resolve conflicts and overcome misunderstandings, one must, on the other hand, recognize that the political and legal framework of a democracy remains a dead letter, and may even appear to be unjust, if it is not animated by a spirit of mutual respect and of shared basic values.

Given the sometimes increasing difficulties of understanding between the different cultures of our world, the initiative for an Alliance of Civilizations has come at the right moment. We are convinced that it will be able to build on the rich experience acquired in the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, with a view to analysing, in a sophisticated manner, the causes of and the difficulties engendered by misunderstandings, as well as proposing joint measures to alleviate them.

In that spirit, Switzerland has already launched several projects at the international level aimed at mutual learning and specific cooperation in areas of common interest between factions separated by important ideological or religious differences. Recently, Switzerland has been particularly interested in understanding the religious dimensions of misunderstandings and conflicts, and has drawn two conclusions: first, progress can only be reached after concrete steps are taken to build confidence; and, secondly, a dialogue about values alone does not strengthen confidence.

The Secretary-General has established a High-level Group within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations. In the terms of reference for that Group, he calls for the identification of collective actions that will establish a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures. Switzerland is willing, in that respect, to share its experiences with the High-level Group and with the secretariat of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Mr. Erçin (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union on agenda item 43, entitled "Culture of peace". I wish, therefore, to expound our views on the other item that we are discussing today, namely, the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations.

The nature and scope of the challenges and threats to the peace, security, welfare and progress of the world today have certainly made the need for a genuine dialogue among different cultures and civilizations more essential than ever. The events of the recent past have not only reinforced that notion, but have also led to its being placed high on the international agenda.

At this critical juncture, Turkey believes that a meaningful and operational dialogue within the international community is, indeed, imperative. We need to actively engage in resolving the issues facing the world today by demonstrating respect for and understanding of cultures and civilizations other than our own. Tolerance, appreciation for different cultures and religious beliefs, harmony and plurality should find their rightful place in the set of principles that shape our respective societies.

Our globalizing world increasingly compels our societies to become more interdependent. We are of the view that mutual understanding and dialogue across cultures and civilizations should be one of the fundamental elements in inter-societal exchanges if we are to realize the ultimate goal of common peace and progress. In that connection, we very much appreciate the encouragement expressed by other delegations today aimed at furthering cross-cultural and cross-civilizational undertakings towards that goal. We were also pleased to observe that this significant issue was duly addressed in the United Nations summit outcome document. Turkey's full support for the matter is evidenced by our sponsorship of the draft resolution on this topic (*A/60/L.6*).

For its part, Turkey consistently tries to build a culture of reconciliation and compromise in its own region and beyond. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)-European Union (EU) Joint Forum, which Turkey initiated in 2002, is a testament to our efforts to promote tolerance, mutual respect, understanding, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures and religions.

Given its historical relations and cultural ties to a wide geographical area, Turkey benefits from the rich perspective it has cultivated through exchanges that facilitate tolerance, harmony and understanding. It is that intrinsic value, which Turkey exemplifies, that made it a natural partner to Spain in promoting the Alliance of Civilizations. Originally proposed by Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero in his address to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan was later invited to co-sponsor the initiative early this year. Since then, Turkey and Spain have been jointly engaged in furthering the initiative, which has also been endorsed by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Alliance of Civilizations aims to address emerging threats emanating from hostile perceptions that foment violence across cultures and civilizations

and to bring about a committed effort globally, at the institutional and civil society levels, to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions and polarization within the world community. As we have all observed, this environment has been exploited and exacerbated by extremists in all societies. The initiative could therefore be regarded as a coalition against that trend, as a movement to advance mutual respect for religious beliefs and traditions and as a reaffirmation of humankind's increasing interdependence in all areas.

The Alliance of Civilizations is a genuine effort to prove that the peoples of the world are not divided along cultural and religious lines, but bound by universal values that are derived from the foundation of humankind's collective wisdom, conscience and drive for progress. We encourage all Member States to respond to that call.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): The words of Samuel Huntington in 1993 that the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics and that the fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future were an ominous forecast of the future. Indeed, 60 years after the end of the Second World War, anti-semitism remains a problem. Racism and xenophobia are issues with which we are still grappling. We are also witnessing the emergence of such new concepts as Islamophobia.

The question may arise: was Mr. Huntington perhaps right? The answer to that question must be a resounding "no". The Organization was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and we the Member States have a responsibility to ensure that that solemn undertaking is upheld. The United Nations has been instrumental in preventing the outbreak of global war during the past years. We are convinced that it is fully equipped to continue doing so in the future.

The dialogue among civilizations initiated by President Khatami is a key initiative aimed at helping us avoid the dark prospect of an all-out clash among civilizations. Since its introduction, that concept has engendered progressively greater interest from Member States, including my own country. That noble initiative gained further strength and weight with the adoption, in 2001, of resolution 56/6, on the global dialogue among civilizations. That resolution included a comprehensive Programme of Action that has been vigorously enacted through a host of multifaceted activities undertaken by Member States and other stakeholders, and was reaffirmed by our leaders in the outcome document of the September summit.

We live in a world that is both unique and diverse. We also live in a world that is increasingly interdependent and rapidly changing. Different peoples, religions, cultures and civilizations are today engaged in an unprecedented level of interaction and in an interchange of values, with ideas and events that originate in one corner of the world and yet instantly affect its other parts. That openness and the perceived defencelessness in the face of change create a natural reaction of rejection, distrust and even fear in people, and lead to attempts to define and protect their identity through exclusion and separation. Yet, the course of human history teaches us that interaction and the preservation of one's identity are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary processes that allow us to learn the best and leave behind the obsolete.

Human civilization reached its current heights only through a long process of interaction and cooperation among nations and peoples with diverse cultures and traditions. Diversity is therefore the prerequisite for the continued progressive development of the human race. It is only by understanding, recognizing, respecting and encouraging that diversity that a genuine dialogue among civilizations can best be attained. Diversity is not a threat; it is indeed our strength. The breakthrough in information technology gives us a unique opportunity to promote it on a global scale.

The draft resolution under this agenda item that we are about to adopt today emphasizes that the real object of the dialogue among civilizations are the hearts and minds of the next generation. Indeed, unlearning intolerance cannot be achieved overnight. It will require years of careful and persistent efforts by all stakeholders, including Governments, international organizations, civil society, media and academia.

Civilizations do not have clear-cut boundaries and borders, they flow smoothly into one another. They are entities that comprise elements of history, geography, ethnicity, religion, customs and politics, and are therefore greatly diversified within themselves. An example of that is the great nomadic civilization of the Eurasian steppe, of which my country is a part.

That civilization not only encompasses Buddhist countries like Mongolia, but also includes predominantly Muslim and Christian societies. A distinct form of world civilization, it has largely existed in peaceful symbiosis with sedentary societies across Asia and Europe, and has played an important role in the development of extensive trade networks and the creation of large administrative, cultural, religious and commercial centres.

Nomadic societies and peoples have played a crucial role in the interaction between different civilizations, as for thousands of years they have served as a bridge between world civilizations. Throughout the history of the world, nomadic civilizations have absorbed the influence of others, both in the West and the East, and in turn have had a profound impact on them. However, the role and contribution of nomadic civilizations has, by and large, received little attention to date.

The rapid advance of globalization poses challenges, along with many opportunities, to the preservation and development of the centuries-old traditions and cultures of nomadic peoples. Among other things, pastoral nomadism permits societies to exploit the variable and patchy resources of the steppe. Its mobility allows for the seasonal exploitation of resources that are not sufficient to sustain human and herbivore populations throughout the year. The ability of nomads to adapt to the whims of nature and to live in harmony with it has produced different techniques and ways of protecting and using land in a sustained manner. That ability is even more useful in view of such environmental threats as deforestation, desertification and soil erosion, which affect the livelihoods of people and developmental prospects in many countries, including nomadic societies.

Guided by the goal of achieving an objective understanding of all civilizations and by the conviction that civilizational achievements constitute a collective heritage of humankind, Mongolia is making every effort to further expand studies on various aspects of nomadic civilization, its influence and its interaction with others. My Government commends the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its valuable contribution to the implementation of the Global Agenda, and particularly its contribution to the study of nomadic civilization through the work of the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations, which is located in the capital of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. Among other things, the Institute has organized international conferences on the theme "Nomadism in Mongolia and its relationship with sedentary civilizations: its relevance and prospects", as well as on "Dialogue among cultures and civilizations: present and perspective of nomadism in a globalizing era".

Mongolia will celebrate the eight hundredth anniversary of its Statehood next year. We believe that that anniversary provides a welcome opportunity to trigger renewed interest in nomadic civilization and to facilitate the efforts of Member States to preserve and develop nomadic culture and traditions in modern society. We also plan to organize a host of activities, both within the country and internationally, to celebrate the rich heritage, traditions and culture of nomadic civilization. In so doing we will be making our own contribution to promoting and facilitating the dialogue among civilizations.

With that in mind, at a later date my delegation will introduce a draft resolution entitled "Eight hundred years of Mongolian Statehood", whose aim will be to promote understanding and recognition of nomadic civilization within the framework of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. My delegation believes that this initiative will command broad support on the part of the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): As we meet at the mid-point of the 2001-2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, we are heartened by the genesis of a global movement of peaceseekers and peacebuilders. We applaud the multitude of grass-roots initiatives blossoming at mid-decade. We also express our profound appreciation and gratitude for the exemplary actions of world leaders, particularly the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, as well as those of a considerable number of eminent persons.

At the midterm of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, we reaffirm the inextricable nexus among peace, development and security. We call for increased and accelerated efforts in the areas of peacebuilding, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, disarmament, sustainable development, the promotion of human dignity and human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance. We commend the many young people from different parts of the world who have

collectively contributed to the mid-decade World Civil Society report on a culture of peace. We also commend and express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO for launching significant activities and initiatives that have contributed substantively to building bridges of unity and common ground among civilizations, religions and societies. The State of Qatar has supported their commendable efforts throughout the years.

Peace is more than the absence of war: peace is a process and a way of solving problems. It does not rest in charters, declarations or covenants alone, but lies in the hearts and minds of all people. In this era of complex international tensions, converging currents of globalization and calls for the clash of civilizations, peace is our most precious common possession. The arduous work to establish peace is an undertaking for every nation and society. To that end, none can be uncommitted; otherwise posterity will rightly point its finger at us all.

From the outset, the State of Qatar has been a fervent supporter of United Nations efforts to foster a culture of peace and to promote a dialogue among civilizations. The State of Qatar has continuously advocated the principle of dialogue aimed at deepening the scope of understanding and establishing the foundations for mutual respect, friendship and cooperation between countries and societies. That incentive has become more urgent after the despicable tragedy of 11 September 2001.

The Emir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Missned, consort of His Highness the Emir, are among the eminent persons who believe in the common humanity of all and who dream of a world where we can all live in dignity and security. Their advocacy, compassion, vision and conviction have led to multiple successful initiatives to deepen the scope of understanding between countries and societies, particularly between the Muslim and Western worlds. The State of Qatar is adamantly against religious bigotry and extremism and categorically rejects any identification or association of terrorism with Islam or any other religion.

At the global level, the State of Qatar has been a leading advocate of the need to promote dialogue among civilizations. Since 2000, it has supported at the highest political level all United Nations resolutions calling for a culture of peace. We have also supported the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, as well as other peace-related resolutions from various United Nations conferences.

In addition, in other regional and international forums — such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council — we have been keen to promote mutual tolerance and understanding between and among nations.

At the national level, the State of Qatar has taken concrete steps to implement the Global Agenda and the Programme of Action. Appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes have been developed to promote the concepts of peace and dialogue. In that regard, considerable attention has been given to the activities of local civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. Relevant information intended to foster mutual understanding and recognition among and within nations has been disseminated widely in national academic circles. Moreover, school curricula and textbooks have incorporated the culture of tolerance and respect for culture diversity, while preserving the values and ethos of Qatari society.

The State of Qatar devotes considerable energy to promoting a culture of peace through hosting dialogues, thereby facilitating interaction and exchanges of values, attitudes and modes of behaviour conducive to enhancing world peace. Such dialogues have focused on the fundamentals of human existence and have addressed crucial issues, thereby underscoring the common goals, principles and interests of the community of nations.

The culture of peace is essentially the cultivation of the creative potential of men and women to develop skills, mindsets, values and attitudes for living together in harmony. The effort to improve the human condition is not a task for the few; it is a task for all nations and societies. We owe it to our children to consecrate every iota of energy and effort we possess to bequeath a world devoid of injustice, prejudice, hatred, extremism, subjugation, mistrust and discrimination of all kinds. We must not fail our children, who in most instances are the primary victims of violence. Let us prepare our children for peace by teaching them to be peacebuilders and to abhor violence and the use of physical force to achieve an aim.

In the next half decade, it is incumbent upon Governments, the United Nations system and civil society, including religious institutions, to attain inter-civilizational understanding on the basis of respect for all religions and for cultural diversity, in order to bridge the wide divide that still prevails amidst the storms of daily conflict and crisis. We must seize the vision of a culture of peace to speed progress toward a better world.

The international community has a moral responsibility to improve life on Earth and to promote peace and tranquillity for its inhabitants. Our work to buttress a culture of peace, coupled with wisdom and adherence to principles, will ultimately determine our destiny. We must strengthen the international community's cultural resources and compassion to contribute substantially and work together towards a culture of peace. The nations of the world must continue to promote dialogue in all areas pertaining to the critical issues of peace, development and security, while underscoring the commonality of goals, principles and interests shared by all Member States. Above all, we should embrace cultural diversity, rather than fear or repress it, in order to engender international cooperation in resolving critical issues.

Organization of work

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to make an announcement concerning agenda item 73, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance". The President has asked His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations, to be the coordinator of the informal consultations on draft resolutions under agenda item 73 and its sub-items (a), (c), (d) and (e), and he has graciously accepted. Luxembourg has done this very successfully in the past. As members will recall, sub-item (b) of agenda item 73 has been allocated to the Second Committee.

The President requests those delegations intending to submit draft resolutions under agenda item 73 to do so as early as possible, in order to allow time, if need be, for negotiations with a view to reaching consensus on those draft resolutions.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to thank the interpreters for their understanding, as we have exceeded our allotted time by a few minutes.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.